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DRAFT TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR & PENSIONS
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Mr. Chairman and Senators, I'm pleased to be with you today to tell my story, and that of my family, of living with an infection resistant to most antibiotics. Not that long ago, most of us hadn't heard of "MRSA." However, today, many of us know someone affected by it or at least have heard of it. Thank you for giving attention to this important issue. I urge you to take action to protect others and prevent them from going through what I've been through.

Being a football player, there are certain things you can expect – including injuries. But MRSA is the worst and most unexpected thing that I have come up against in my twenty year football career. A tiny little thing that I cannot see which has hurt me more than any of the other injuries combined. MRSA had a hand in ending my career.

In 2005, while playing for the Washington Redskins, I had routine knee surgery and expected to fully recover and to be ready for the upcoming season. The surgery was performed and I was fine for about eight days, then the stitches were taken out. That night, a hot spot

developed over the porthole used for the surgery. I began feeling sick—flu-like symptoms and my knee hurt like someone was lighting me on fire. By the time I was put in the hospital two days later, the infection had spread from a quarter-sized red spot to cover a good portion of my leg. One of the first doctors that I saw told my parents that if I had waited another 24 hours we could be talking about the loss of my leg or worse. Surgery was performed and the infection was washed out.

But now I had to deal with the rest of the treatment, including home IV for six weeks on the drug vancomycin – which wears you out. It took my energy and appetite. I was told not to lift anything over 5 pounds with my arm that had the IV port in it. With kids and normal activity, that was pretty limiting. Three times a day, for 1-1/2 hours, I had to sit down and get my treatment. Then due to a reaction to the vanco, I was taken off that antibiotic and placed on Zyvox, an oral med that is very strong and has very uncomfortable side effects. I completed my treatment and was given a clean bill of health.

By this time, I had missed the entire off-season workout program. This is my career and livelihood. Now I had to cram an off-season into three weeks. I was able to get some reps during preseason camp, but in compen-



been infected, I hurt my other leg and required surgery again. I was placed on injured reserve and forced to sit out for the season.

While all this was going on we found out that my wife was pregnant with our third child. So, since I was on injured reserve I was able to stay home and help my wife out. Chasing two little kids around all day, I re-injured my knee and after having the knee drained several times over a couple weeks, I started to get sick again. Same symptoms as before—burning in the knee and the worst flu symptoms you can imagine.

I was admitted to the hospital for surgery. The next day, my wife was admitted to the hospital and our third child was born. Because of my MRSA they were hesitant to let me in the delivery room. But, with necessary precautions, my wife's doctor said I could be there. Missing the birth of a child is not acceptable and would have been devastating. I was scared to hold my son for fear of getting him sick. Again, I was sent home with IV antibiotics.

I continue to live with MRSA. The thing that scares me the most is that I could be a carrier of this bug and have to worry about my wife and kids getting it. Knowing how painful and serious it is, that is the last thing I want to happen. I have three young children who will have a lifetime of cuts

and scrapes. I will keep a close eye on each child because I am incredibly paranoid about them getting MRSA. Any small red bump on any of my kids and I am pestering my wife to keep an eye on it, ready to go to the doctors at the drop of a hat.

My wife has been incredible through this experience. In fact, because of it, she's gone back to school to become a nurse and to help others.

An unwelcome complication from my last surgery was developing two blood clots, one in each lung. Because of the clots and the MRSA, I lost my career as a professional football player. This infection has had a huge impact on my life and continues to impact me and my family. Hopefully, I am not a carrier and will not have to worry about this forever.

Please remember, my story is only one of many, and I'm lucky to be here to share it with you. As lawmakers, I urge you to look at the growing problem of resistant infections that have few, if any, antibiotics to treat them. MRSA outbreaks have impacted sports teams, school children, our military, and others. But, there are many other infections which antibiotics are failing to treat.

Mr. Chairman and Senator Hatch, I greatly appreciate your dedication to this issue and your recognition that much more needs to be done to protect public health. Your legislation, the STAAR Act, would better focus the federal government on this issue. I understand the government has an Action Plan that is nearly 8 years old and much of it has yet to be implemented – even those items identified as priorities. Your bill makes sure there's a point person, a coach more or less to lead the team and hold all the players accountable.

Also, your bill improves what is known about antibiotic use and assist research in this area. We need to learn more about these infections and the ability to treat them. Finally, your bill will make a difference in prevention. It would monitor new or problematic infections and hopefully prevent their spread. It would collect and study samples of these emerging infections so that physicians will know more about them and help to identify them. For patients like me, it makes all the difference if your physician is on the look out for these infections and can properly treat them as soon as possible.

And, of course, we need to make sure new antibiotics are developed to keep ahead of these bad bugs. These infections take down the

strongest and healthiest of us. I hope my experience points out that this truly can happen to anyone.

Thank you.

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